



May 2021

EVERYTHING BEGINS TOGETHER WITH MARY

From the Acts of the Apostles (1, 6-14)

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, has the time come for you to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority. But you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea and Samaria, and indeed to earth's remotest end." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Why are you Galileans standing here, looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way as you have seen him go to heaven."

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

From Padre Pio's speech on the Assumption of Mary (Epist. IV, p. 1123)

We Catholics who venerate in Mary most holy, the most tender and affectionate of mothers cannot but exult with joy on this sacred day the memory of her greatest triumph, I mean her assumption into heaven and her coronation as Queen of Angels and all Saints. Let us therefore pause for a while to consider the power and glory of the most holy Mary assumed into heaven, in order to get more involved in devotion and trust towards her.

After the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven, Mary continually burned with the deepest desire to be reunited with him. And oh! the fiery sighs, the pitiful moans that she continually addressed to him, so that he would call her back to him. Without her divine Son, she felt as though she was in the hardest exile. Those years she had to be separated from him were for her, the slowest and most painful martyrdom; a martyrdom of love that consumed her slowly.

But finally the longed awaited hour has come and Mary hears the voice of her beloved calling her from above: "Veni, soror mea, dilecta mea, sponsa mea, veni": come, O beloved of my heart, the time of groaning on earth is finished; come O bride, to receive from the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit the crown that is prepared for you in heaven.

This loving invitation becomes manifest to Mary Most Holy through a more ardent love, that makes her desire ever more to see and unite with her Son. Her heart tells her that her desires are now about to be satisfied and she is happy and ready to leave the earth. She already seems to feel angelic harmonies moving towards her ...

Divine love reached its greatest intensity in Mary's heart, so much so that it could no longer be restricted in a mortal creature. Therefore Mary's blessed soul, like a dove whose snares are broken, dissolved from her holy body and flew into the heart of her beloved.

But Jesus who reigned in heaven with the most holy humanity, which he had taken from the womb of the Virgin, also wanted his mother not only with her soul, but also with her body, to be reunited with him and fully share in his glory and this was right. That body that was not even for an instant a slave to the devil and to sin, could not be corrupt.

CATECHESIS

A question: can we "recount" the Rosary?

Padre Pio describes Mary's Easter season in the speech prepared for the feast of the Assumption. This liturgical moment in which we joyfully contemplate the Resurrection of Jesus and our salvation, and - in the reflection of Padre Pio - a time in which Mary also unites sadness to joy because of the separation from her Son: "Those years in which she was separated from him were for her the slowest and most painful martyrdom, a martyrdom of love that consumed her slowly ».

Obviously every prayer made to Mary binds us to Christ and helps us to meditate on his mysteries, the Rosary however can help us; to share this characteristic of the Virgin and is present in the life of the Church of all ages. On the one hand, faith already gives us a foretaste of the glory that we will live in heaven, just as Mary tasted it after the resurrection, moreover she used to live our same expectation, that sense of incompleteness. Meditating on the mysteries of Jesus' life with her, means sharing this presence and, at the same time, waiting for God. In this sense, the Rosary makes us feel like an ecclesial community that welcomes Christ in the Word and in the Sacraments, but together waits to contemplate him in eternity.

The Rosary, prayer of expectation

In the few references we find of Our Lady in the Gospels we have this constant characteristic: since adolescence her heart lived this tension towards God, which was expressed in total and absolute fidelity, expressed in the Magnificat, which evokes many pages of the history of the people of Israel.

Mary contemplates this God who fills her with gifts like his people, blesses them as the One who raises the humble and keeps the promises made to Abraham. Mary is the daughter of Sion of whom Zephaniah speaks....

The mysteries of joy and the mysteries of light undoubtedly frame the Virgin as the one who relives the experience of love of the people of Israel and reciprocates by placing herself entirely at the service of God's plan. In this way the Incarnation of Jesus is not just a privilege and she is not simply an instrument in the hands of God: like the people of Israel, Mary participates firsthand in God's plan by adhering to it without reserve and with a love and a donation that will accompany the whole of Christ's life. It will be Jesus himself who will recognise her total openness to the will of the Father; as we know one day He heard a voice saying from the crowd that followed him: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast that fed you", and He replied: "Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it".

Listening to the Word produced in Mary a constant yearning towards heaven, which - as Padre Pio points out - continued even after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus into heaven, indeed it became the constant question of faith of the Virgin who wished to reach full communion with God. In this way, Mary is our mother but also a model of that tension towards heaven which must characterise the life of every

Christian. There are many passages in which Padre Pio recommends this pull towards heaven and on different occasions re-proposed to his spiritual children, the theme of eternity to which all are called. When Cleonice Morcaldi asks him how to reciprocate the gifts of God, despite our weakness and imperfection, he replies that we need to give: «Love, always love. Spread your soul in sentiments of gratitude and humbled before God. Try to do better: today better than yesterday, tomorrow better than today».

With the Rosary on the altar of Jesus

When we speak about the mission of the Church, we must never forget that, based on Mary's example, she is called to retrace the journey of the people of Israel towards the promised land and therefore to live in each of it's members the expectation of the final encounter with God. If we place the Jewish people as a point of reference, we cannot fail to underline it's multiple presence on the path towards salvation.

The people live firsthand, the proclamation and witness of the truth about God: the one God defended at the cost of the lives of the Maccabee brothers, is vehemently announced by the prophets, is received as Father and guide in the desert. It is precisely there that the commitment of fidelity is born, represented by the Sinai Covenant, which will often fail due to its ambiguity. The recurring theme of this people's infidelity to the Covenant will find a definitive solution in Christ, who lives the paschal mystery firsthand: that death and resurrection within which the sacrament of the new and eternal covenant takes life.

Mary lives her participation in the sufferings of Christ in a totally unique way. The many images of the Pietà represented in our Churches summarise how much we are called to live the many mysteries of the Rosary. Padre Pio teaches us that we cannot stop at the mere contemplation of the mystery. The thirst for souls which Jesus gave to Mary and John at Calvary is what pervades his entire mission; he wrote to Cleonice Morcaldi: «Who am I? I am torment of souls! A devouring fire that burns inside all my bowels».

When the Mass was said in Latin, the devotion of the recitation of the Rosary during the Eucharistic celebration was prevalent; obviously with the Mass celebrated in Italian (or in various national languages) it is no longer appropriate. However, the Rosary is promoted as a useful prayer to prepare for the Eucharist, precisely because the meditation on the life of Jesus, especially the mysteries of his passion, which introduce us well to what should be our involvement in the sacrament of that new Covenant, which marks the immolation of Christ for the salvation of brothers and sisters.

The Rosary is a missionary prayer

We are the Church, the new people of God, constituted by Jesus to become the sign of this new Covenant; it is true, we are not individually better than anyone else, because we still feel the weight of our weakness and our sins upon us, but we are linked to Jesus, our head; it is He who made a new Covenant with God, which has no end, despite the inconstancy and ambiguity of men.

The glorious mysteries help us to contemplate Mary in this unfinished phase of our history: we walk towards God, but our steps falter, temptation becomes stronger, and we invoke "pray for us sinners", "to the end without end", as Saint Augustine used to say.

The Virgin who from Easter to the Assumption lived in expectation of the final encounter with God, now shares in our waiting, with the Rosary she becomes a teacher in the knowledge of that Jesus whom we still see through the veil of faith, but whom she already contemplates in eternity. The Rosary lived this way becomes truly a missionary prayer. Listening to those who suffer, sharing the hopes of the youth, trying to turn on a light in the moment of doubt, it can become, through prayer lived together as a waiting for God, an occasion to give back to everyone that trust of a tomorrow guided and visited by his Providence.

Missionary men and women

We are at the third missionary appointment of this year: it would be very important to learn to listen to and to welcome all those who live that emptiness which is not a lack of faith, but an uncertainty of love. With our words and - above all with our life – we can speak of a God who truly loves us. The invitation for our Groups is to make them available to the parishes in order to organise the recitation of the Rosary in condominiums or in the neighborhoods furthest from the church.

Prayer for the House for the Relief of Suffering

O holy and glorious God,
so full of love for your children
that you sent your Son to give us life and salvation, we
thank you because the Holy Spirit,
poured out on the Church by Jesus
continues to bring forth brothers and sisters
who put their own existence at the service of the poor, the
suffering and the needy,
following the example of Christ.
Through the intercession of Padre Pio,
who carried the signs of Jesus' love on his body, grant to
his Work,
the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza,
the grace to be faithful to the charisma of its founder, so that each
one can bring your love to the bed of the sick: make of the Casa a
temple of life,
guiding hearts to loyalty and transparency in their actions. Instill
feelings of gratitude and love
in the Prayer Groups and in the devotees of Padre Pio so that even
today they may be the sign of that Providence which wanted this
work as a testimony to all of the boundless trust in the Love and
Mercy of God.

Padre Franco Moscone crs